

**SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
OUTREACH AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE**



The Pride of Marampa

PRESS CLIPPINGS

Enclosed are clippings of local and international press on the Special Court and related issues obtained by the Outreach and Public Affairs Office

as at:

Friday, 1 June 2012

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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Local News

Prosecutor Says...Burkinabe President Supported Salone War... / <i>Awoko</i>	Page 3
Taylor Pockets £950 M From Blood Diamonds / <i>New Vision</i>	Page 4
Amnesty Details Talor's Atrocities / <i>Premier News</i>	Page 5
Taylor's 50-Year Jail Term Welcomed / <i>Premier News</i>	Page 6
Charles Taylor Goes Down at Last / <i>Ariogbo</i>	Page 7
Amnesty International's Twenty Years With Charles Taylor / <i>Independent Observer</i>	Page 8
Taylor To Fight Back / <i>The Exclusive</i>	Page 9
Charles Taylor: Sierra Leone Scapegoat: Part 2 / <i>Awareness Times</i>	Pages 10-12

International News

We Were Hired To Remove Taylor – Conneh / <i>The New Dawn</i>	Page 13
Analysts: Taylor's Fate a Lesson for Our Leaders / <i>The Citizen</i>	Page 14
Taylor Sentence Sparks Justice Debate in Liberia / <i>Voice of America</i>	Pages 15-16
Kenya: Taylor Verdict a Lesson for Kenya / <i>Capital FM</i>	Page 17
Former Liberian President Charles Taylor Sentenced to 50 Years / <i>The Associated Press</i>	Pages 18-19
Rwanda's Callixte Nzabonimana Gets Life for Genocide / <i>BBC</i>	Page 20

Awoko

Friday, 1 June 2012

Prosecutor says... Burkinabe President supported Sierra Leone war through Taylor

By Betty Milton

The Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone Brenda Hollis has said that the President of Burkina Faso Blaise Compaore was not indicted because most of the support he gave to the rebels during the war was through Charles Taylor.

Brenda Hollis was responding to a question from Awoko about why the Burkinabe president had not been indicted even though his name had been cited several times in the course of the trial.

Through the video link press conference held in The Hague the Prosecutor, said "in terms of others who were named, we followed the evidence in determining who should be prosecuted and during the period of time, that the indictment covers and the period of time that the mandate of the court covers our investigations indicated that support from Burkina Faso came predominantly if not exclusively through Charles Taylor, through his

connection, through him and through his country," adding that "so our decision was to prosecute the person most proximate to the crimes and in our views it was Mr. Taylor."

Another area of concern for most of the journalists at the press conference was that of reparation being paid to the victims of the war in Sierra Leone.

To this the Prosecutor said this raises several different issues as the victims of the conflict that ended in Sierra Leone several years ago are "still suffering and their needs have not been met."

She noted that this is a much broader issue than the Special Court, as the court is a "criminal court" and their business is to investigate and prosecute "nothing more nothing less".

She said "I believe there is a program that will address victim needs and I believe there have been programs for the victims."

However Brenda Hollis said in relation to the findings, that the trial

judgment will be provided to the Government of Sierra Leone and it will form the "basis that could be used for individuals to pursue remedies against the assets of Mr. Taylor and that is within the rules of the court."

She disclosed that people need to remember that society is coming out of this kind of prolonged conflicts with such horrific crimes being committed against the people throughout the country, and that they have many needs. "Among them is the need for accountability and in meeting that need one of the options is accountability in the criminal court but that is one of many needs and there needs to be an integrated package or many packages to address all of the needs including the ongoing needs of the victims of Sierra Leone."

The lead Defence Counsel of Taylor Courtney Griffiths was also questioned about the fate of the diamond that was given to Naomi Campbell by Charles Taylor. He said that as far as he knows the diamond should be with the South African Government and that the Government of Sierra Leone should write to Jacob Zuma (South African President) and request for the diamond.

New Vision
Friday, 1 June 2012

Taylor Pockets £950M From Blood Diamonds

sterling (£950m) during Sierra Leone's eleven years brutal civil war.

The sixty four years old former warlord was on Wednesday May 30th 2012 jailed for fifty years by the trial chamber of the Special Court for Sierra Leone for his part in 'some of the most heinous and



Charles Taylor

Former Liberian President Charles Taylor is thought to have acquired from the Revolutionary United

Front (RUF) rebels blood diamonds worth as much as nine hundred and fifty million pound

brutal crimes recorded in human history'. Taylor will serve his time Contd page 3

Taylor Pockets £950M From Blood Diamonds

in a British jail, after former British Prime Minister Tony Blair's government in 2006 made the offer to resolve a stand-off that had delayed Taylor's two-year trial. He was convicted of aiding and abetting Sierra Leone rebels on a savage decade-long rampage that ended in 2002 and killed 50,000. Pivotal to the case was the evidence of supermodel Naomi Campbell and actress Mia Farrow, who provided a clear link between Taylor and the blood diamonds he received in payment for arms. London-born Miss Campbell admitted being given a pouch of uncut gems by the president's men after a dinner in South Africa. Judges at an international war crimes court said the warlord-turned-president funneled arms, ammunition and other supplies in

return for 'blood diamonds' mined using slaves.

However, judges ruled that Taylor armed and supplied the rebels in full knowledge they would likely use weapons to commit terrible crimes. This was in exchange for payments of 'blood diamonds' often obtained by slave labour.

Taylor stepped down and fled into exile in Nigeria after being indicted by the court in 2003. He was finally arrested and sent to the Netherlands in 2006.

Campbell's former agent Carole White also gave evidence that contradicted that of the model. She said that Campbell knew the diamonds were from Taylor. Actress Mia Farrow trial that fashion model Naomi Campbell confided she had been sent a 'huge diamond' by the former Liberian



ruler in 1997.

More than 120,000 people were killed and two million displaced in Sierra Leone's civil war which was characterized by atrocities, the use of enslaved child soldiers and the amputation of children's limbs as a weapon of terror.

Britain played a vital role in ending the war after Tony Blair sent in 800 troops in May 2000 to evacuate foreign nationals and support Sierra Leone's fledgling democracy. (Culled from mailonline.co.uk)

Premier News
Friday, 1 June 2012

Amnesty Details Taylor's Atrocities

In April 1992, Amnesty International representatives back from researching human rights abuses committed during the internal armed conflict in Sierra Leone noted that an invasion force led by the NPFL under Charles Taylor had captured towns and villages in the southern and eastern provinces of Sierra Leone. The rebel forces, Amnesty International said, had been responsible for major human rights abuses, killing hundreds of people who refused to help them.

In a report on the 1995 Liberia peace agreement released in September 1995, Amnesty International reported that a number of political assassinations - including two leading opposition party figures carried out in July 1994 - had been ordered by the NPFL under Charles Taylor's leadership.

In August 1997, Charles Taylor was inaugurated as President of Liberia following the general election of July 1997. In October 1997, Amnesty International called on the newly elected government of Liberia to place human rights on the national agenda and investigate human rights abuses committed during the war.

In December 1999, an Amnesty International press release noted that Charles Taylor had intimidated a Liberian human rights group, the Justice and Peace Commission of Liberia (JPC), after it called for a truth commission to be established in the country to look into violations committed during Liberia's seven-year internal armed conflict.

An April 2001 report remarked that Charles Taylor's government had done virtually nothing to investigate and bring to justice those responsible for widespread human rights abuses during Liberia's internal armed conflict, which had been raging since 1989.

The report also documented that since mid-2000, dozens of civilians had allegedly been extrajudicially executed and more than 100 civilians, including women, had been tortured by the Anti-Terrorist Unit (ATU) and other Liberian security forces. It noted that a former media consultant to President Taylor had 'disappeared' after he criticized exploitation of forest resources in southeastern Liberia by logging companies without benefits to the locals.

In July the same year, Amnesty International reported that at least 40 Liberian students attempting to hold a peaceful rally had been tortured by security forces. At least 20 students were detained and female students were reportedly raped while held incommunicado and without charge for weeks. Yet the Liberian authorities did not open any investigations into the allegations and no one was brought to justice, Amnesty International said.

In December 2001, Amnesty International called on the international community to take steps to protect the population from further human rights abuses in Liberia.

In June 2003, the Special Court for Sierra Leone announced publicly that Charles Taylor was charged with war crimes. Charles Taylor was in Accra attending

talks aimed at ending Liberia's internal armed conflict and Amnesty International urged the Ghanaian authorities to arrest him. In August that year, Taylor resigned the presidency and was granted exile in Nigeria.

In the following years, Amnesty International repeatedly urged the Nigerian government to arrest Charles Taylor.

On 23 March 2006, Amnesty International called on Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo to comply with Liberian President Johnson-Sirleaf's request for Taylor to extradite Taylor and allow him to face trial at the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Taylor was captured by Nigerian authorities during a failed attempt to flee the country, and by 29 March he was surrendered to the Special Court for Sierra Leone in Freetown.

In February 2007 Amnesty International concluded that during Charles Taylor's presidency, no effort was made to remedy past human rights violations committed during the armed conflict.

Government security forces, including the Anti-Terrorist Unit, included former combatants who had not been vetted or retrained, nor undergone any process of demobilization or reintegration.

Numerous examples of interference of the executive in trials, especially those of political nature, proved that the judiciary was not independent of the executive, and it made no effort to bring any of the perpetrators to justice. Impunity reigned.

Amnesty International continues to call for the investigation and prosecution of Charles Taylor for crimes he is alleged to have committed in Liberia.

Premier News
Friday, 1 June 2012

Taylor's 50-year Jail Term Welcomed

The Centre for Accountability and Rule of Law (CARL) yesterday hailed the 50-year jail term imposed on former Liberian President Charles Taylor.

It is "The strongest message yet that the era of impunity for the 'big men' of Africa is coming to an end," it states in a release yesterday.

Charles Taylor was convicted on 11 counts of planning, aiding and abetting rebels who murdered and mutilated tens of thousands of people during Sierra Leone's 11-year brutal civil.

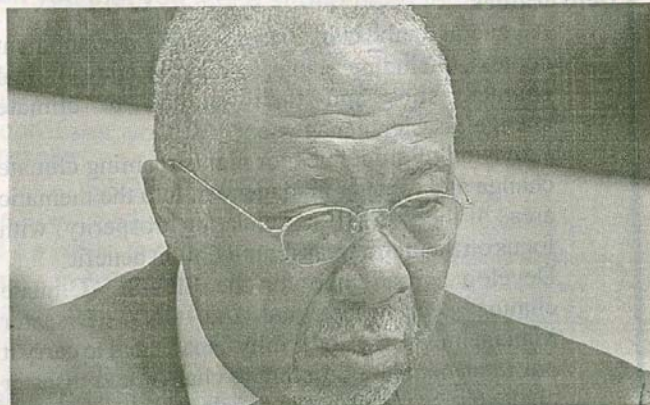
"No matter how long Mr. Taylor gets to spend in jail, the lives that were prematurely and brutally terminated, the limbs that were hacked off, and the indignity and sexual enslavement which women and girls were subjected to during the war, will never be restored or repaired. His trial and conviction, however, represents a vanguard for the new era of accountability that is emerging across the world. African leaders cannot afford to ignore this message," CARL Executive Director Ibrahim Tommy said.

Justice Richard Lussick, who read the

verdict, said, "Mr. Taylor's leadership role puts him in a different class," than the other Special Court convicts, underscoring the responsibility political leaders have in protecting the lives and property of their people as well as in promoting regional and global peace. The Court also stated that Charles Taylor's primary motivation for supporting the rebels was for financial gain, which it considered as an aggravating factor in sentencing.

"This is particularly heartwarming in light of the role of blood diamonds in fuelling the Sierra Leone conflict," one amputee told CARL shortly after the verdict.

Even as we hail the outcome of the Taylor trial, CARL wishes to remind all and sundry that serious gaps still exist in terms of promoting accountability for serious violations of international humanitarian law, and urges the international community to step up efforts at ensuring that those responsible for such violations in Africa and



other parts of the world are brought to justice.

"War victims, no matter their nationality or personal circumstances, share a common sense of deprivation, pain, anguish and indignity. They all deserve justice," Mr. Tommy added.

Charles Taylor is the first former African head of state to be tried and convicted by

an international criminal tribunal.

Specifically, the Special Court's Trial Chamber II found Mr. Taylor guilty of planning attacks on Kono and Makeni, as well as aiding and abetting the commission of crimes in the capital, Freetown. Both the defence and prosecution have a right to appeal, but they must do so within fourteen days.

Ariogbo

Friday, 1 June 2012

Charles Taylor Goes Down at Last

EDITOR'S DESK

News that Liberia's former president and notorious warlord Charles Ghankay Taylor has been sentenced to fifty years imprisonment for his role in our country's eleven year old conflict has been received with mixed feelings.

It is a fact that Charles Taylor did play an active role in the war in his country Liberia which later spilled into Sierra Leone. Photographs of Charles Taylor toting heavy machine guns and dressed in military fatigue are evidence that he cannot be blameless.

The issue now on the floor is not whether Charles Taylor is guilty as charged, but whether he deserves a lighter sentence as his Defense team is trying to assert. From all indications, Charles Taylor's Defense lawyer looks set to appeal the sentence as do the Prosecution which also wants to convince the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague that the fifty years sentence handed down was too light.

Well, we can expect that in the following weeks and months, the stakes would rise and the spotlight would once more be focused on the activities surrounding Charles Taylor.

However, we wish to state here that it really does not matter whether Charles Taylor gets fifty or one hundred years imprisonment for his role in our country's violent past. As we say in our local parlance: *If ose nor sell you, treet nor go buy you.* Meaning in English: *If you are not sold by your own people, no one would buy you.* Another scenario similar to ours is the story about Joseph in the Bible who was sold into slavery by his own brothers. If it was not that God had destined the young Joseph for greater things, we would not know about Joseph who saved a great nation like Egypt from starvation and rescued his family from famine. Put simply, what we wish to highlight is the fact that Charles Taylor could not have found Sierra Leone easy prey had it not been for the treacherous Sierra Leoneans amongst our midst who sold us like common cake to destroyers.

Had it been a situation where a handful of Sierra Leoneans had remained resolutely loyal and patriotic to their country, we might not have had the nightmare called Charles

Taylor to deal.

Be that as it may, we should accept whatever verdict the ICC hands down to Charles Taylor. We should use the Charles Taylor episode as a lesson to learn from. We should use the Charles Taylor episode to say never again will

Sierra Leoneans sell Sierra Leoneans for selfish or personal gain. We should use this incident to strengthen our resolve that united we stand and divided we fall. We should try to put the Charles Taylor episode behind us and move on. How long can we cry over

spilled milk? Therefore, it is our submission that we consider the past as our heritage; the present as our responsibility and the future our challenge. Let Charles Taylor and his merry band of terrorists take back stage in our mind and let us move on!

Independent Observer
Friday, 1 June 2012

Amnesty International's twenty years with Charles Taylor

Former Liberian president Charles Taylor has been given a 50-year prison sentence in the Hague by the Special Court for Sierra Leone for aiding and abetting war crimes. The prison term is for crimes committed in Sierra Leone between 1996 and 2002.

Amnesty International looks at key dates in the organisation's campaigning work on his crimes and alleged crimes in Sierra Leone and Liberia prior to his arrest.

Charles Taylor, who also led the armed opposition group National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), was found guilty last month by international judges of aiding and abetting war crimes during the Sierra Leone internal armed conflict. He is yet to be prosecuted for crimes allegedly committed in his native country, Liberia.

While this historic judgment affirms that former heads of state cannot consider themselves immune from international justice, Amnesty International remains concerned that tens of thousands of people who suffered atrocities in Liberia and Sierra Leone are yet to see other perpetrators brought to justice.

TIMELINE

In April 1992, Amnesty International representatives just back from researching human rights abuses committed during the internal armed conflict in Sierra Leone noted that an invasion force led by the NPFL under Charles Taylor had captured towns and villages in the southern and eastern provinces of Sierra Leone. The rebel forces, Amnesty International said, had been responsible for major human rights abuses, killing hundreds of people who refused to help them.

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The Exclusive
Friday, 1 June 2012

Taylor To Fight Back

By Musa Sesay

Lawyers representing former President of neighbouring Liberia, Charles Gangay Taylor, have 14 days to appeal from the day the Trial Chamber passed a lengthy jail term on the judgment.

The lawyers described the 50 years jail term slammed on their client as very excessive. Addressing journalists and civil society groups after the sentence, Taylor's lawyers maintained that they would definitely put the judges to task with a legitimate appeal. Lawyer Griffith and his battery of legal luminaries questioned the charges and the evidence which led to their client's lengthy jail sentence.

"We are going to challenge aiding, abetting and planning charges because we are not pleased. Furthermore, the trial chamber never considered the mitigating fac-

tors even though Charles Taylor played a key role in achieving peace in Sierra Leone," one of the counsels said.

Lawyer Griffith maintained that certain governments facilitated the prosecution of their client and Charles Taylor himself accused the United States Government as key players in achieving that objective.

The defence team also questioned UK prison where Taylor is expected to serve his sentence. They recalled how former Yugoslavia President was attacked in his cell without much protection, presuming that their client will also suffer in a similar way if taken to Britain.

He accused the Trial Chamber of bribing a particular witness the sum of US\$40,000 and other benefits to testify against Taylor, which they claimed affected the quality of the judgment.

Awareness Times

Friday, 1 June 2012

Charles Taylor: Sierra Leone Scapegoat: Part 2

By Dr. Sylvia Olayinka Blyden

Paragraph 112 of the Summary Judgment against Charles Taylor as read out on April 26th 2012 by Justice Richard Lussick, the Presiding Judge states:

During a radio conversation with Foday Sankoh, following the attack on Sierra Rutile in 1994, the Accused [Charles Taylor] advised the RUF leader to send an External Delegation to Côte d'Ivoire. In Côte d'Ivoire, the delegates met Musa Cissé, an NPFL representative, who allowed them to use his radio for communications with Sankoh. The Accused, through contact with Musa Cissé, invited members of the External Delegation to Liberia, where he met them twice in 1995. In December 1995 the Accused met members of the External Delegation in Cote d'Ivoire on the occasion of the publication of "Footpaths to Democracy", at which time he gave them CFA 10 million francs for their maintenance.

So who or what was this External Delegation? And what else happened in Ivory Coast (Cote d'Ivoire) in December 1995? Mrs. Agnes Deen Jalloh (nee Bio), is elder sister of Julius Maada Bio, the Presidential candidate of the main opposition Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP) which enjoys bastion of its support in South-Eastern Sierra Leone where the RUF launched its war. Currently influential SLPP members supported RUF in its initial stages. The former SLPP Leader and President, Alhaji Tejan Kabah publicly stated at the Yamoussoukro Peace Talks that in 1991, when he first heard of Sierra Leonean RUF rebels waging a war in 1991 to remove the then APC Government of General Momoh from power, he was very happy and supported the RUF; only withdrawing his support when he disagreed with their savage methods against innocent civilians. Without a doubt, Tejan Kabbah is indeed a perfect gentleman and obviously the RUF savagery did not seat well with his conscience. However, that was Ahmad Tejan Kabbah the gentleman with a conscience; Many others continued their support for the RUF despite the savagery.

One such person was Mrs. Agnes Deen-Jalloh (nee Bio). She is much older than Julius Maada Bio. Agnes raised Maada Bio and put him through school. Her husband, Dr. Deen-Jalloh and her were reported to have been 'forced' to join the RUF in early stages of the war. Agnes and her husband were so senior in RUF rank that they became trusted to be the ones to be sent out of Sierra Leone as RUF diplomats (External Delegation) who were given posh residential houses in an Ivorian town known as Danane near the border with Liberia. Members of the 'External Delegation' including Agnes Deen-Jalloh (nee Bio) lived a posh lifestyle in Ivory Coast from as far back as 1994 as now stated in the judgment against Charles Taylor.

During all this time his sister was living in Danane, Ivory Coast as an RUF Diplomat, Julius Maada Bio was the Deputy Head of State in Sierra Leone and later, additionally, the Chief of Defence Staff directly supervising the war against his sister's RUF inside Sierra Leone. He never made this known to the public.

Now, let me reveal today some facts which have been classified for a long time. In December 1995 when he was Deputy Head of State and Chief of Defence Staff, Julius Maada Bio secretly sent three of his most trusted soldiers on a secret mission to meet with his RUF sister in Danane, Ivory Coast. The soldiers all wore plain clothes and posed as civilians. Unfortunately, they got arrested by Ivory Coast Government soldiers at the border when their identities were proven to be Sierra Leone soldiers camouflaged as civilians.

Such deception on the part of Sierra Leone soldiers crossing into Ivory Coast through Liberia had proven to be a diplomatic headache for Captain Valentine Strasser, the then Sierra Leone Head of State, whom it is reported, knew nothing of the mission of his Deputy!

Strasser, it is reported by my sources during my investigations, was furious and considering action against Julius Maada Bio, his Deputy. Few weeks later, the very next month, (January 1996) Strasser was abruptly overthrown by Bio. These are facts which very few Sierra Leoneans know about but which a proper examination of the war (like some of us have extensively done) will produce for Historians.

There has always been a puzzle for me over the reason behind Maada Bio sending soldiers secretly into Ivory Coast in December 1995. His reported explanation to his boss had been that he had been informed his sister was being held as a captive in Danane town in Ivory Coast and so he had sent those commandos to kidnap his sister and bring her back by road to Sierra Leone through Liberia. That was his explanation back then.

This is one of the issues I had personally asked Foday Sankoh about when I met him. His response was that he gave a request from the bush, for the

Ivorian Government to release Maada Bio's soldiers and that his request was promptly adhered to and the men were released. Before the men could re-enter Sierra Leone, Maada Bio had overthrown Valentine Strasser.

To those floating the talk of Liberia and other States having to pay us remuneration, let me tell you it is going to be very interesting when the Liberians and other accused nationalities will get Agnes Deen Jalloh to be de-briefed for the international court when the SLPP's proposed 'President' Julius Maada Bio files papers at THE HAGUE. The elder sister who raised him up served as diplomatic emissary for the RUF at the time they were performing horrors against their fellow Sierra Leoneans.

Many aggrieved South Eastern Sierra Leoneans are quite right about the horrors which many of their relatives went through at the hands of the RUF but it still does not take away the fact that many other South-Easterners warmly welcomed the RUF and provided succor for them. Sama Banya is claiming "only one Paramount Chief" willingly supported the RUF and he got forgiven by the SLPP Government. That alone, is evidence of top level collaboration of at least one South-Eastern leader. However, it was not just "only one Paramount Chief".

As I have insisted before, my extensive investigations have proven to me beyond all reasonable doubts that there exists a supremacist mentality amongst a certain small group of persons (a clique) from the South East who believe only they are well ordained to rule. As a result, when they are not in power, they will do ANYTHING to over-turn the status quo including attacking their own people in the South East. The majority of South-Easterners are very decent, peace-loving, friendly, warm and docile people.

However, this minority, tiny clique of supremacists indoctrinates their offsprings to embrace the same supremacist mentality. So, there are various generational levels of members of this clique from the South East. It is only when we learn their true nature which has been handed down successive generational lines that we can understand a significant problem facing our country today and in the future.

Members of this clique will do ANYTHING to be the ones ruling the country. This includes suppressing and oppressing their people in the South and East. This is one of the reasons behind their dire and desperate need to always instill tribalism into our body politics. That is the only way this clique can survive by promoting sectionalism at any slight opportunity. The SLPP for

them is just a vehicle through which they attain power. The late Dr. Soyebi (RIP) recognized this very well in several radio and newspaper interviews he gave.

Turning weapons and lethal blows against their own in order to get to power is not unusual for this clique. It is only when Historians really investigate the war that we will learn what happened, understand this clique and always be prepared for them at all times. Right now, we are underestimating them because we do not know the true story of the war.

We do not understand what really happened because we have been presented with a SCAPEGOAT in the form of Charles Taylor by folks like Mr. Lans Gberie who has cleverly and deceitfully distorted History to cloud the reality of the war. His theory is obviously nonsense but him and others in his clique are actively promoting it. They are helped by the fact that Taylor possesses a terrible reputation over his dealings in Liberia.

I will continue Part 3 later but meanwhile, here is the quote from an Awareness Times report which is very relevant for a better understanding of the mindset of how a certain South-Eastern clique operates. It concerns a report about the violence which was launched in the Southern Province against South-easterners who did not support Julius Maada Bio's bid to be the SLPP Presidential Candidate.

“On the part of Mr. Jabbie, former SLPP P.R.O. for Bo District, he recounted how he was violently attacked by supporters of Mr. Maada Bio in Moyamba two weekends ago during the SLPP's Southern Province regional elections. He said he had to be rushed to a hospital in Freetown where he was still admitted suffering from “severe abdominal and body pains” as a result of the beating he suffered from Bio supporters”.

As this quote above of a report quoting South-Easterners brutalizing their fellow South-Easterners for power, turning of weapons and lethal blows against their own in order to get to power is not unusual for this clique.

STAY TUNED FOR PART 3

The New Dawn

Friday, 1 June 2012

We Were Hired To Remove Taylor – Conneh



One of the erstwhile Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) most notorious perpetrators, Sekou Damateh Conneh has confessed being supported by the international community to waged war.

The 52-year-old leader of the defunct Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) admitted for the first time, but denied killing of innocent people here.

Former Rebel Leader Conneh made the disclosure Wednesday when he spoke to a local radio station (Love FM) in Monrovia less than 24 hours after the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone sentenced former Liberian President Charles Taylor to 50 years imprisonment.

He did not only deny the massacres committed by his rebel LURD forces from 1999 to 2003, but failed to name those countries which, he said, supported LURD either with materials (weapons) and finances.

Neighboring Guinea was used as the launching ground on 20 April 1999 by the insurgents against the regime of former President Taylor elected in 1007.

“We were hired by the international community who wanted Taylor out and it was the mission we carried out for that matter,” revealed Conneh. He has, at the same time, rejected any future international tribunal here on ground that he and his forces did not commit atrocities during their rebellion.

“War is war; everybody here participated-whether you buy bullet or not. Furthermore, LURD fighters were all Liberians and not mercenaries who did not kill anybody,” He claimed.

LURD was essentially the reorganized group of the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO) of Alhaji Kromah faction (ULIMO-K). According to Kromah, now Ambassador-At-Large in the new Ellen Sirleaf administration, ULIMO’s goal was the ‘removal of Taylor’ from power.

Conneh may have been appointed Chairman of LURD, mainly because of his high-level contacts with the Guinean government at the time during the regime of the late General Lasanah Conte.

The Citizen

Thursday, 31 May 2012

Analysts: Taylor's fate a lesson for our leaders

By Bernard Lugongo and agencies

Dar es Salaam. Local experts in politics have alerted the country's leaders of the need to respect human rights lest they suffer the fate that befell former Liberia president Charles Taylor on Wednesday.

Judges at the International Criminal Court (ICC) sentenced the former Liberian leader to 50 years in prison, saying he was responsible for "some of the most heinous and brutal crimes recorded in human history."

The 64-year-old warlord-turned-president is the first former head of state to be convicted by an international war crimes court since World War II, and judges said they had no precedent when deciding his sentence.

Speaking to The Citizen yesterday, the University of Dar es Salaam's political expert Richard Mbunda said the verdict should serve as a warning to African leaders who still embrace dictatorship.

"Government leaders should bear in mind that acts of violation of human rights that they engage in are documented. They should know that one day they will face international laws," he said. On how the case was handled, Mr Mbunda said he thought justice has been served on behalf of victims.

The Open University of Tanzania (OUT) political lecturer, Mr Hamad Salim, also noted that the manner in which the case's proceedings were conducted ensured that Taylor did not escape liability. He said African leaders ought to remember that they can't stay in power forever, and they could still be prosecuted even after finishing their term in office.

He called on leaders to respect human rights and refrain from being used by Western countries to further their personal interests. The executive director of the Legal and Human Rights Centre, Dr Hellen Kijo-Bisimba, said leaders needed to respect the country's laws.

Voice of America

Thursday, 31 May 2012

Taylor Sentence Sparks Justice Debate in Liberia

Kate Thomas

DAKAR - The sentencing of former Liberian president Charles Taylor on Wednesday was heralded as an historic moment for Sierra Leone. But in neighboring Liberia, many say the justice and reconciliation process is only just beginning. As Taylor was handed a 50-year jail term, Liberian rights groups and activists were debating whether Taylor's allies and rivals should also be subject to international justice.

The sentencing of Charles Taylor for war crimes committed during Sierra Leone's conflict has sparked debate in the former leader's native Liberia.

Many Liberians did not follow the trial proceedings, believing that it was more relevant for Sierra Leoneans.

But others gathered around radios Wednesday as news of Taylor's 50-year jail term was read out.

The matter has sparked calls for other Liberians suspected of war crimes to be handed over to international courts. Liberia's media have run editorials and held radio debates on the advantages and disadvantages of the idea.

Larry Tengbeh, who lives in Monrovia, is among those who think Taylor should not be the only one held responsible for war crimes. "There are a number of them roaming around in Liberia. They need to face justice," he said.

He's talking about former rivals, and in some cases, allies of Taylor during Liberia's civil conflict, which ended in 2003, a year after Sierra Leone's.

At least five members of Taylor's wartime inner circle are still under U.N.-imposed travel bans and subject to economic sanctions.

Others had recommendations made against them by Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

But those recommendations, including one that President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf should be barred from public office for funding Taylor's pre-war rebellion in Liberia, have never been implemented.

There have been calls for Prince Johnson, Taylor's former rival who came in third in last year's presidential race, to be pursued for crimes against humanity.

In 1990, Johnson was videotaped drinking from a bottle of beer while soldiers loyal to him tortured the late President Samuel Doe.

"Other warlords like Prince Johnson who led another rebel group in Liberia, face the full weight of justice too. He must have his day in court for the killing of former President Samuel Kanyon Doe," said Tengbeh.

But Marpue Tarnue, a 35-year-old housewife, said the issue of pursuing justice should be put to rest.

"I think the people of Sierra Leone got the justice they had been looking for. The trial is over and it is

time for the two countries to put the past behind them and move forward," she said.

Some feel that during Liberia's conflict, which left 300,000 people dead, many people came away with dirty hands.

They say that everyone became a part of the system of war, and that holding individuals responsible will prevent Liberia as a whole from moving beyond the conflict.

Nobel laureate Leymah Gbowee is currently leading a reconciliation initiative in Liberia, backed by President Johnson-Sirleaf. But Liberians say the process, which focuses mostly on discussion, has been slow to get off the ground.

Teddey Morris, who has been following the trial, asks how Liberian reconciliation should be defined.

"Reconciliation is about forgiving and forgetting the past. A sentence of 50 years is not what you call reconciliation," he said.

In 2008, Liberian novelist Elma Shaw published a book called "Redemption Road."

It told the story of a Liberian girl, Bendu, who was abducted during the war and forced to marry a rebel fighter at a camp in the forest. It is a story that speaks to thousands of Liberian women who had similar experiences.

After the war, Bendu reflects on her time in the forest.

"For Bendu, forgetting was out of the question," Shaw writes, "but remembering and doing nothing about it was even worse."

The question, for Liberians, is just what should be done.

Capital FM (Nairobi)

Thursday, 31 May 2012

Kenya: Taylor Verdict a Lesson for Kenya

By Judie Kaberia

Nairobi — Kenyans have welcomed the sentencing of former Liberian President Charles Taylor and urged the country to learn a lesson that no one is above the law.

Central Imenti MP Gitobu Imanyara said Taylor's sentencing should be a lesson as Kenya prepares for the next general election to be mindful that people will be held accountable for their actions.

"Let those abusing their offices know that they will not escape accountability. It is a message particularly pertinent for us in Kenya as we enter the final electioneering phase before casting our votes on 3rd March next year. I applaud this decision," he asserted.

Kenya Human Rights Commission Programme Officer, Legal Affairs Esther Waweru told Capital FM News that it should also send a message to powerful leaders that killing people and destruction of countries has consequences.

She said his sentencing was of great hope especially to victims who have been waiting for justice.

She said it was also an important step towards building the jurisprudence of international criminal law.

"Finally a message is being sent that no one is above the law. The long arm of the law will catch up. In Taylor's case, there is one conviction that people can actually see and relate to," she said.

International Center for Policy and Conflict Executive Director Ndung'u Wainaina described the sentencing as a 'landmark triumph of justice and accountability over impunity'.

Wainaina further said the international community was concerned about the plight of the victims and the sentencing of Taylor demonstrated victims deserve justice.

"It sends a deterrence message to leaders considering committing serious crimes in violation of international law even those at the highest level, that they will be held accountable for their actions. Justice cannot be carried out in isolation of the victims of the crimes," he said.

Meanwhile, Kenyans penned their reactions on social media as most of them related the Taylor case to the Kenyan cases against Uhuru Kenyatta, Francis Muthaura, William Ruto and Joshua arap Sang.

Some were of the view that the four will face similar fate while others said it is a good lesson to end impunity in Kenya.

Tagged: East Africa, External Relations, Human Rights, International Organisations, Kenya, Legal Affairs, Liberia, Sierra Leone, West Africa

The Associated Press

Friday, 1 June 2012

Former Liberian President Charles Taylor Sentenced to 50 Years

By Mike Corder

Former Liberian President Charles Taylor was sentenced to 50 years imprisonment Wednesday for arming and supporting murderous rebels in Sierra Leone in return for "blood diamonds," a landmark sentence activists hope will send a clear message to despots around the world that they will be held to account for sponsoring atrocities.

Taylor, wearing a blue suit and gold tie, stood grim-faced and silent as Presiding Judge Richard Lussick of Samoa imposed what will likely amount to a life sentence for the 64-year-old.

Lussick said Taylor's position as head of state at the time of his crimes put him in a "class of his own" when judges came to setting the sentence -- one of the longest ever handed down by the Special Court for Sierra Leone or any other international tribunal.

Taylor shipped arms, ammunition and other supplies to rebels in Sierra Leone in return for personal wealth in the form of diamonds mined by slave labor and to gain increasing political clout in the volatile West Africa region.

Taylor's reaction in court Wednesday was in stark contrast to the delight of survivors who gathered in the Sierra Leone capital, Freetown, to watch a live feed of the sentencing.

"That makes me the happiest person on earth," said Alimami Kanu, who was 11 when rebels backed by Taylor hacked off his right hand. He was one of thousands of civilians mutilated during Sierra Leone's decade-long civil war that ended in 2002 with some 50,000 dead.

Human rights activists and international law experts also hailed the tough sentence as a warning shot for war criminals.

"Today's sentence not only reflects the severity of Taylor's crimes but sends a clear message that individuals who aid and abet war crimes can no longer act with impunity," said Patrick Alley, director of Global Witness, a non-government group that campaigns to prevent conflicts erupting around exploitation of natural resources such as diamonds and timber.

The sentence came a month after Taylor became the first former head of state since World War II to be convicted by an international court. Judges found him guilty of 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including murder, rape, torture and the use of child soldiers.

"The lives of many more innocent civilians in Sierra Leone were lost or destroyed as a direct result of his actions," Lussick said.

Prosecutors had sought an 80-year sentence and said they are considering appealing.

"It is important in our view that those responsible for criminal misconduct on a massive scale are not given a volume discount," said the U.N.-backed court's chief prosecutor, Brenda Hollis.

Hollis said Taylor's prison term would only provide a measure of closure for victims of one of Africa's most savage conflicts.

"The sentence that was imposed today does not replace amputated limbs. It does not bring back those who were murdered," she said. "It does not heal the wounds of those who were victims of sexual violence and does not

remove the permanent emotional and psychological and physical scars of those enslaved or recruited as child soldiers."

Taylor will serve his sentence in a British jail. His lawyers, however, said they will appeal his convictions and that will likely keep him in a jail in The Hague, Netherlands, for months.

Taylor's lead attorney, Courtenay Griffiths, criticized the court for refusing while setting Taylor's sentence to take into account his decision to step down from power following his indictment in 2003. Griffiths said that sends a worrying message against the backdrop of ongoing atrocities allegedly being committed by Syrian President Bashar Assad's forces.

"What lesson does that send to President Assad?" Griffiths said. "Maybe the lesson is: If you are a sitting leader and the international community wants to get rid of you, either you get murdered like Col. Gadhafi, or you hang on until the bitter end. I'm not so sure that's the signal this court ought to be transmitting at this particular historical juncture."

Griffiths said Africans should use Taylor's conviction as a starting point to campaign for justice for themselves.

"Justice isn't something which Africans should obtain, exported to them from abroad by the white man, the civilizing force," he said.

His comments appeared to be aimed not only at Taylor's trial, but also at the world's first permanent war crimes tribunal, the International Criminal Court, which has been in operation for 10 years and has so far launched prosecutions only in Africa, including in Sudan, Congo, Libya and Ivory Coast.

At a sentencing hearing last month, Taylor expressed "deepest sympathy" for the suffering of victims of atrocities in Sierra Leone, but insisted he had acted to help stabilize the West Africa region and claimed he never knowingly assisted in the commission of crimes.

Judges rejected that argument, saying that while he posed as a peacemaker he was covertly fanning the flames of conflict by arming rebels.

Taylor stepped down and fled into exile in Nigeria after being indicted by the court in 2003. He was finally arrested and sent to the Netherlands in 2006.

While the Sierra Leone court is based in that country's capital, Freetown, Taylor's trial is being staged in Leidschendam, a suburb of The Hague, for fear holding it in West Africa could destabilize the region.

Mark Ellis, the executive director of legal group The International Bar Association, said the verdict and sentence should act as a deterrent -- in time.

"So far in the recent history of these courts doesn't suggest that these courts are a deterrent yet. But that is the hope that eventually they will be," he said.

Andrew Drake and Clarence Roy-Macaulay in Freetown, Sierra Leone, contributed.

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Rwanda's Callixte Nzabonimana gets life for genocide



Up to 800,000 people were killed in just 100 days

A former Rwandan youth minister has been given a life sentence after being found guilty of playing a key role in the 1994 genocide.

Callixte Nzabonimana was found guilty of genocide, conspiracy, incitement and extermination by the UN tribunal based in Arusha, Tanzania.

His lawyer told AFP he will appeal.

Ethnic Hutu militia and soldiers killed some 800,000 minority Tutsis and politically moderate Hutus in 100 days between April and June 1994.

Public incitement

"The trial chamber found that... Nzabonimana instigated the killing of Tutsis. It also found Nzabonimana guilty of entering into two separate agreements to kill Tutsis," the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) said in a statement.

The conviction of the former youth minister hinged on his participation, alongside other members of the government, in a meeting held on 18 April, 1994 in the town of Murambi, in the central Gitarama province.

This meeting led to "an agreement" between Nzabonimana and other ministers "to encourage the killing of Tutsis... with the specific intent to destroy, in whole or in part, the Tutsi population as such in Gitarama prefecture," the AFP news agency reports the court's verdict as finding.

The three ICTR judges ruled that Nzabonimana used public appearances in different parts of Gitarama to incite people to kill Tutsis.

"We will definitely appeal. The appeal hearing starts now," lead defence counsel, Vincent Courcelle-Labrousse, said.

Nzabonimana, 59, was arrested in Tanzania in February 2008.

The ICTR - set up in Arusha shortly after the 1994 genocide - is due to wind up its work by the end of 2014.